# Building Bridges Across Languages: Human-Centered AI for the Euro-Med

# International Conference

**Dates:** June 6-7, 2024

**Location:** Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Venue:** Center of Excellence in Finance, Cankarjeva cesta 18, Ljubljana

In June 2016, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and the Anna Lindh Foundation organised the "Translation for Dialogue" conference, the first of its kind in the Euro-Med region. The conference brought together experts and cultural actors involved in translation to showcase, debate, and advocate for translation as a central tool for intercultural dialogue. The participants pledged an ambitious Euro-Med translation policy to foster cultural diversity and promote shared values.

Since then, translation has been relevant in promoting intercultural dialogue and strengthening a shared identity based on cultural diversity between Euro-Med societies. However, a new player has entered the scene that has the potential to disrupt, for the good or the bad, this pattern. Nowadays, AI can accurately understand and generate human language, leading to impressive translation quality that is expected to improve in the near future. This change has been facilitated by the convergence of AI's computational capabilities, the availability of more data of better quality, and increasingly sophisticated software.

The evolution of AI-powered translation tools holds the potential to create a more connected and inclusive regional community where language is no longer a barrier to information, services, and cultural exchange. Advances in AI technology can enable translation tools to capture and interpret cultural nuances and idiomatic expressions more effectively, thereby improving the quality of translations or allowing for the automated translation of less-spoken languages and dialects. This can foster deeper intercultural understanding and trust. This unparalleled technological progress comes with risks for practice and policy. While AI can generate societal benefits, its integration into our daily lives requires a cautious approach, as numerous technical, social, ethical, and political challenges must be addressed to ensure their development and implementation. For example, AI translation systems are susceptible to design, deployment and operation biases. They are at risk of reflecting, perpetuating or amplifying existing inequalities, discriminatory patterns, and stereotypes or even creating new ones, raising ethical concerns. Also, the increasing performance of AI translation raises concerns about the potential displacement of human translators and how to make sure that, as AI continues to advance, the role of humans is not diminishing but instead evolving, enabling them to remain relevant and competitive in the job market.

In this spirit, the Anna Lindh Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia intend to promote a human-centered approach to the role of AI in translation in the Euro-Med region. This is based on a commitment to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in AI access and usage by engaging in Euro-Med multi-stakeholder collaboration. The objective is to contribute to translation policy and practice by creating and sharing knowledge and developing actionable strategies to bring humans and AI together to benefit intercultural dialogue.

**AGENDA**

**Day 1, June 6, 2024**

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| *13:00- 14:00* | ***Registration and welcome coffee*** |
| *14:00-14:45* | ***High-level opening remarks*** |
|  | * Her Royal Highness, Princess Rym Ali, President, ALF * Tanja Fajon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia * Valter Mavrič, Director-General for Translation, European Parliament * Rado Bohinc, President, Euro-Mediterranean University, EMUNI   Moderator:   * Boštjan Zupančič, Head of Translation Service, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs |
| *14:45-15:15* | ***Keynote address*** |
|  | * Ildikó Horváth, Director, Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union |
| *15:15-16:30* | ***AI translation in action: Case studies from the Euro-Mediterranean region***  This panel will feature a series of case presentations by front-runners in AI translation, offering insights into tangible projects that exemplify the integration of AI in language services. The presentations will pave the way for an interactive Q&A, inviting active participation from the audience.  Speakers: |
|  | * Alenka Unk, Translator and Language Technology Coordinator, DG Translation, European Commission * Gavin Brown, Lead digital transformation, Tarjama * Imane Khaoujia, MoroccoAI co-founder and Professor in NLP & AI Ethics at University of Kent, UK * Mihajela Črnko, D4D Expert (AI), Digital for Development (D4D) Hub Secretariat   Moderator:   * Josep Ferré, Executive Director, Anna Lindh Foundation |
| *16:30-16:45* | ***Networking break*** |
| *16:45-18:15* | ***Ethics and AI: Navigating bias and fairness in multilingual contexts***  An expert panel will delve into the ethical considerations inherent in the design and development of AI translation, discussing bias, fairness, and the ethical implications of AI in multilingual scenarios. The session will culminate in a Q&A, providing a platform for engaging dialogue on maintaining integrity in AI practices.  Speakers: |
|  | * Joao Pita Costa, Researcher, International Research Centre on AI under the auspices of UNESCO, IRCAI * Gabriela Ramos, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO (video statement) * Omar Choukrani, Co-founder and Team Lead, AtlasIA   Moderator:   * Mihalis Kritikos, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission\* |
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| *20:00* | ***Networking reception hosted by the State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Marko Štucin*** (City Museum of Ljubljana)  **Day 2, June 7, 2024** |
| *8:30 – 9:00* | *Registration and welcome coffee* |
| *9:00– 10:30* | ***Human+AI collaboration: Reskilling and upskilling for the future***  This panel will discuss the symbiotic relationship between human translators and AI, addressing how professionals can adapt and enhance their skills in anticipation of future developments in AI translation. The session will encourage discourse on education and skill development, followed by an audience Q&A.  Speakers: |
|  | * Jana Zidar Forte, Translation Department, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs * Manal Amin, Founder and CEO, Arabize * Marjana Rupnik, Head of Language Department and Head of Interpretation Department II, DG Translation, European Commission * Naully Nicolas, Vice-Chairman, Scientific Committee, Agence Francophone Intelligence Artificielle * Wayne Holmes, Associate Professor, IOE, UCL’s Faculty of Education and Society, University College London   Moderator:   * Mitja Jermol, UNESCO Chair in OER, International Research Centre on AI under the auspices of UNESCO, IRCAI |
| *10:30- 10:45* | ***Networking break*** |
| *10:45 -12:15* | ***Overcoming data deficits: A focus on low-resource languages***  This panel will address the challenges of compiling robust datasets for underrepresented languages within AI systems, emphasizing the Euro-Med context. The discussion will engage with the consequences for diversity and access to AI, followed by a Q&A session.  Speakers: |
|  | * Alenka Guček, Researcher, Jožef Stefan Institute * Asmelash Teka Hadgu, Co-founder and CTO of Lesan and Fellow at DAIR * Karim Bouzoubaa, Full Professor, Mohammed V University, Rabat * Simon Krek, Head, Centre for language resources and technologies, University of Ljubljana   Moderator:   * Davor Orlič, COO, International Research Centre on AI under the auspices of UNESCO, IRCAI |
| *12:15-12:30* | ***Closing remarks*** |
| *12:30* | ***Networking lunch*** |

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